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DISCIPLES IN DOUBT

FIVE SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

IN

MAY, 1876, AND FEBRUARY, 1879,

BY

J. B. PEARSON, LL.D.,

FELLOW OF SAINT JOHN'S COLLEGE; VICAR OF NEWARK;
FORMERLY CAMBRIDGE PREACHER AT WHITEHALL.

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1879

Theology Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

And so I live, you see,
Go through the world, try, prove, reject,
Prefer, still struggling to effect
My warfare; happy that I can
Be crossed and thwarted as a man,
Not left in God's contempt apart,
With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,
Tame in earth's paddock as her prize.

BROWNING'S *Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day.*

THE VICARAGE,

NEWARK-UPON-TRENT,

April 25th, 1879.

MY DEAR BISHOP OF MELBOURNE,

Waiting for an answer by return from the Antipodes is such weary work, that I am venturing to dedicate this little volume of Cambridge Sermons to you without your permission. Dedications have, I believe, gone out of fashion of late; but I hope that you will pardon my thus making an opportunity of publicly acknowledging the many debts of a long friendship. Our walks and talks in the good old Paddington days are among my most pleasant memories; and if I could think that the following pages were kindred in spirit to the counsel which you have at

various times given to a 'disciple in doubt,' I should hope that they would not be without their use in the world.

I am afraid that some of us at home still rather begrudge the good people of Melbourne their Bishop; but this sad vestige of the old Adam in our hearts does not prevent our wishing you and them every blessing.

I am, my dear Bishop,

Yours very sincerely,

J. B. PEARSON.

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I.

SHEW US THE FATHER.

(Fourth Sunday after Easter, 1876.)

ST JOHN xiv. 8, 9.

Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?

WHILE I was thinking of the subject whereon I am about to speak, a remark that I heard in Cambridge some time ago occurred to my mind to the effect that the sermons preached in this place were to a great extent apologetic in their tone and structure. There was, if I am not mistaken, a certain

degree of censure implied in the observation. It appeared to our critic that the preacher here is apt to be too much a warrior and too little a builder—that the hand which holds the trowel is brought little into use compared with the hand that holds the weapon. If the growth of the higher life be hindered—if the development of the several graces which adorn the Christian character be retarded—by a too frequent appeal to arms, that were indeed a sad result. But I think that there is a sufficient reason for our trying here to express as much as we can see of the relations of religious thought to thought in general. There is in our day abundant proof that the interest taken in theological and philosophical questions is far from being confined to professed theologians and philosophers. We may be quite sure that our magazines and reviews would not abound as they do in articles upon the ends of life and the nature of things, unless there were a demand on the part of the public for that special class of literature. The condition of mental acquiescence

in the voice of clerical authority which the Poet Laureate has sketched in one of his shorter poems, is happily not the general condition of the professional and commercial classes with whom we are brought into contact in our towns. On the contrary, one of our great dangers is the existence of a current of doubt and uncertainty below the surface, which is hidden from the clerical eye through a mistaken courtesy, lest the clerical mind should be shocked by the sight thereof. It is then surely of the last importance that we should prove ourselves awake to the questions which are being asked by other educated men, whether the answers we can give them be to their satisfaction or not. If we, who are appointed to be watchmen and guides, become the centres of little circles of adherents instead of trying to influence the general course of thought and feeling, the loss will be partly no doubt our own, but, I venture to add, partly also the loss of society at large.

Again, in our particular case, allowance must be made for the present constitution of our

academic society. The changes which the last few years have seen in the ancient homes of learning which cluster round this Church have tended to bring together the holders and maintainers of various creeds and of variously formulated negations of all creeds. There is much that is hopeful in this condition of things; it is certainly a grand opportunity for mutual improvement. That was a wise exhortation delivered before our University more than a century ago —wise for this time as well as for that. After dwelling upon the continual improvement of the world, the preacher said: “Let us concur with this auspicious course of Providence, and each contribute our endeavours towards carrying on this progress by every serious, fair, and free inquiry: free not only from all outward violence and clamour, but also from (what our most holy religion equally condemns as being the root from whence these spring) all inward bitterness, wrath, hatred: learning to bear with one another’s mistakes in this as well as other matters; nay rather the more here, since these

are of the highest consequence and this the only proper method to remove them: thus labouring as well to reform the errors of our brethren in love, as to promote and confirm their knowledge of truth; not for that in either case we have dominion over their faith, but as being helpers of their joy."

We should do well to take such advice to heart. What a different thing controversy would be from what it often is if those engaged in it tried to speak and write not as lords of other men's faith, but as helpers of their joy. Then the difference between apology and edification would almost disappear. Not by drawing hard and fast lines around the outlying suburbs of the city of our faith—not by asserting our individual opinions on open questions as though they were fundamental truths—but by candid acknowledgment of difficulties where difficulties exist, and by courteous interchange of opinions with those of our neighbours whose different trainings and different pursuits have placed them at points of view that differ from

our own, may we hope to commend ourselves to the consciences of others in the sight of God. So as knowledge grows from more to more—so as the thoughts of men are widened—we who amid new lights still try to walk by the old rule, may contribute each his share of labour to that grand result—the establishment in our own and in our neighbours' minds of a harmonious relation between the thought which claims to be unceasingly progressive and the Gospel which claims to be unchangingly true; and bringing stones from divers quarries we may build them up into a temple holy to the Lord. May God help me thus to be a helper of your joy while I bring before you from time to time certain portions of our Lord's long and loving farewell to His disciples.

The page containing our text is the best-thumbed page in many a Bible. In times of sorrow its words of hope are reassuring; in the hour of death its heavenly consolations have been amid the best external supports of the departing soul. Well do I remember being told

ten years ago that this was notably the case with one whom many of us remember as combining in himself some of the highest characteristics of the Christian priest and the acute philosopher. That Gospel of our Father's love and our Saviour's work, which is the best support in death, is surely the best guide in life. And life, remember, includes thinking as well as acting. A message which tells of a Father above us, pure Truth and Light—of a Son who dwelt on earth as the Word of the Father, in whom we read the Father's mind, through whom we know the Father's character—of a Spirit given by the Father to His children to conform them to the image of His Son—this is not a message to be lightly treated as though it were but a piece of more or less discreetly arranged machinery for keeping people moderately honest and sober and chaste. It will either do more than this, or it will soon cease to do this. It is not in the nature of Christianity to remain a rule, when it has ceased to be a faith. The Christian faith answers some

of the questions we ask of it wholly, some but partially ; in all cases it does distinctly and emphatically give us a point of view. If we relinquish that point of view, we must relinquish the practical corollaries that follow from it; so that we may not only say that it is a guide in thinking as well as in acting, but that in order to be a guide in acting it must also be a guide in thinking. May the day never come when the clergy of the English Church will consent to be merely teachers of social morality, pretending meanwhile that they regard themselves as heralds of the Truth of God.

And after all—notwithstanding the growth of knowledge and the widening of thought—notwithstanding the extended horizon of science and the achievements of ‘original research’—the questions that men want answering—each for himself and each for his brethren too—remain much the same from age to age. That at some time in our lives we have all to ask them almost as if they had never been asked before is no discredit to them, but rather a

proof how deep is their spring in our common nature. Most of us can take our botany and astronomy on trust from other men and remain pretty much at our ease. But it is not so with the answers to the great problems of Human Life. Every thoughtful man must be a metaphysician, whether or not he likes the name. Whence and whither? Why, and why not? Such are the questions that in spite of all the discouragement which the positivist spirit can bestow upon them well up within us all, and I cannot help thinking that the fashion is growing up among us of speaking too timidly of what Christ and Christ's Gospel claim to be in regard of the answers to these questions, as though the New Testament contained merely some useful advice pleasantly given about the propriety of our being kind to our neighbours. The Gospel of Christ claims to be a genuine unveiling of eternal thoughts. To them who really accept it, it means more than an essay on philanthropic sentiment with a little element of poetry in it to make it popular; it

claims to be a piece of divine metaphysics, to give a divine answer to those questions which our hearts prompt and our reasons ask; it claims to shew us Him whom our souls long with a heaven-born longing to see. How true it is that the questions which exercise our minds are fundamentally identical with those which have exercised the minds of the men of former ages, all students of the history of religious thought know full well. It is not accidentally, but by a law of our being, that we are brought face to face with them. That cry of Philip's, "Shew us the Father," embodies a demand common to the first half of the first century, and to the second half of the nineteenth. Indeed the extreme naturalness—the truthfulness to the strivings of humanity—which is evinced in those apostolic interruptions of our Lord's discourse as recorded by St John, goes far to establish the substantial accuracy of the evangelist's account. Why cannot I follow thee now? Lord we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?

Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. In these queries and requests we may trace the workings of the heart as we know it; and if so, we shall probably be led to acknowledge a common element in the questions which harassed the minds of those first learners in Christ's school and the questions which harass ours. Thus we may hope to be able to read in our Lord's answers to them the divine medicine for the doubting hearts of all generations.

If you take in hand any recent volume of discussions upon religious topics, in which the spirit of doubt prevails over the spirit of belief, I think that you will be able to assign to each of the discussions a not inappropriate motto from the words of disciples uttered in this their period of despondent hesitation. Take St Peter's eager question, "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now?" and read it into modern phrase: If there be indeed above us a loving Father whose tender mercies are over all His works, why cannot He prove His tender mercy to us His children who dwell on this

earth of change and chance, by shewing us more clearly than He does the eternal beyond the changes—the permanent beyond the chances? Why cannot the hidden things of a future life—if future life indeed there be—be made more evident to us at once? Why cannot the veil that hides immortality from mortal vision be drawn aside so that we may see the world into which we soon must enter? Or take again that question of the nervously sceptical but intensely affectionate Thomas: “Lord, we know not”—with what familiar sound this brief confession “we know not” falls upon our ears, how many do not see their way to trusting because they know not as they think that they should know the details of the divine economy—“Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?” Or translate that ultimatum of Philip’s in the text: “Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us;” talk to us no more of believing and trusting and hoping, but shew us a manifest sign which there is no mistaking of the presence of that Holy Will

that rules all things and works for goodness amid the strange and apparently contradictory phenomena of nature and of life. If all that Thou tellest of the divine fatherhood be true, then let us not have to take it any more on trust, but let the heaven be opened—the heaven wherein lies hidden the divine plan of things—so that amid the confusions and trials and sorrows and woes which afflict this earth of ours, we may see how all things are tending towards the establishment of the just and true in all places of God's dominion, instead of being called upon to believe where we cannot see.

Thus the step from the standpoint of the Apostles in the hour of their bewilderment to that of some popular writers and lecturers in our own generation is not so great as at first sight it looks. It is scarcely too much to say that Mr Mill might have found mottoes for his essays on religion, and perhaps Professor Huxley texts for some of his lay sermons, in the words of the Apostles of our Lord just at that time when they needed and when they received His

deepest teaching concerning the Father's revelation of Himself to man. Just think a little of Philip's words and of the state of mind which they betoken. Possibly, as some have thought, that remarkable occasion in his life upon which he had been asked to introduce certain Greeks to Jesus may give the key to the request urged in the text. You will remember that our Lord availed Himself of the incident referred to, to declare in very striking words the fact of His mission from the Father—the nature of His work on earth—the character of them who would serve Him among men. He spoke of the dying and fructifying of the grain of wheat, of the keeping of life unto life eternal by the sacrifice of it here, of the honour which shall be done by His Father to them who serve Him; and then He added, "Now is my soul troubled; what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." The evangelist tells that heaven answered to this heavenly prayer, "There came a voice from

heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." We can well imagine that these things set Philip thinking, that they made him anxious and restless as he asked himself what they could mean, and that as he thought, he longed intently and earnestly for brighter light and clearer manifestation. The training of the twelve, even while their Master was yet with them, was not carried on without many questionings and surmisings and conjectures and speculations. They spent many an anxious hour, depend upon it, in trying to frame into a coherent whole the strange things which they saw and heard. Their Christianity at this time was perhaps not capable of being expressed in creeds and articles of faith (these were the product of a later day) but consisted rather in an intense personal devotion to Christ. The strength of their love to Him rather than the agreement of their thoughts about Him bound them together in that one communion and fellowship. Think then thus of Philip as loving Christ and turning over and over in his

mind all imaginable issues of their blessed companionship. How these thoughts would naturally be brought to a degree of intense anxiety when he heard Christ speak of His departure, of the Father's home of many mansions, of Himself as the way to the Father. This manner of speech no doubt tended to bring things to a crisis within him until the strong craving of his wrought-up soul found utterance in those bold words: "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." I wonder what form of manifestation he longed for--perhaps for a dazzling brilliancy and glory such as once for all should establish the credit of Christ's mission, comforting His friends, confounding His enemies--perhaps for the immediate establishment of a visible Kingdom of God upon earth, whose laws and judgments should be recognised without question by all men as divine. At all events he was impatient at being talked to about what he could not see, and felt that the Christ of God might at once have set at rest their doubts by one grand divine event.

Now that there was something wrong about this request of Philip's—something which shewed imperfect apprehension of truth which he might have known, is plain from the tone of our Lord's answer. If one might take his request as a prayer for the final illumination of passages in our own lives and in the world's life which at present are dark, then indeed the words would become absolutely appropriate to the Christian's state on earth. It is the first beatitude thrown into the form of a petition; Grant us the blessing promised to the pure in heart. If we ask for the great gift in the right spirit then shall we with patience wait for it. But it was not thus that Philip asked. With childish impatience as well as with child-like simplicity he uttered that bold prayer for the vision of the invisible. What he required was that Christ should cause an appearance of the Father externally to himself, and there came out the weakness of his faith and the imperfection of his knowledge. He had not improved his opportunity as he might have

done, and consequently he had asked amiss. And why was this? Perhaps if the Apostle had looked straight into the recesses of his inmost self just then, he would have found that he was thinking more of power than of goodness, more of a glory that should dazzle the eye than of a purity and love that should win the heart. He thought of the divine as something other—something grander, more striking, more awe-inspiring—than “the mind that was in Christ.” How beautifully tender was our Lord’s rebuke! “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father: how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?”

We have thus in the Apostle’s prayer a rich study of character—a lesson in the working of human minds and hearts. Can we find in Christ’s answer to the prayer any supply of our own needs? I think we can: neither the need nor the supply are out of date. Let us then approach the deepest of our cravings from another point. Intellectually, the desire to trace

all events to one cause and all phenomena to one law—in other words, the love of unity: morally, the longing to see all things under the rule of righteous love and good triumphant over every form and every phase of evil; spiritually, the restlessness of our hearts until they have found an eternal resting-place: these are all so many expressions of the great natural necessity—man's need of the sight of God. They are all so many echoes within us of Philip's prayer. Where shall we look for God? where shall we behold the face of an all-wise, all-loving Father? for that will suffice us—that and that only will set our restless hearts at rest. The Deists of the last century answered with one answer in varying forms: We need no Bible; we need no Gospel; we need no Christ: we will look up from Nature unto Nature's God. What is new and special cannot be the eternally and universally true: Christianity, therefore, in so far as its teachings are true, is as old as the very earth. So one of them asserted the sufficiency and absolute perfection of

natural religion. So another asserted that there was not nor could be an external revelation distinct from the internal revelation of the law of nature in the hearts of all mankind, and so well pleased was he with the religion that he had sketched upon these lines that he declares that it is a religion, as he hopes he has fully proved, founded upon such demonstrable principles as are obvious to the meanest capacity—a religion, too, that prevents the growth both of scepticism and enthusiasm. So a third is absolutely satisfied with the law of nature, which reason collects from the nature of things, whose tables are hung up in the works of God, and are obvious to the sight of all men, so obvious that no man who is able to read the plainest characters can mistake them. Of some previous writers on this law of nature, whom the world had honoured, he declares that “they puzzle and perplex the plainest thing in the world, and that they seem to be great writers on this subject by much the same right as he might be called a great traveller who should

go from London to Paris by the Cape of Good Hope."

I need not give you further specimens of this class of literature. You see its general character. Attacks on the faith of Christ came then mainly from writers who represented themselves as so flooded with light that they needed no more, who regarded Christian divines as guilty of a most ridiculous work of supererogation in holding up the gospel's feeble taper while they were luxuriating in the broad daylight of nature's noonday sun.

Well, we will leave the Deists for the present; they have told us what they have to tell. We will listen now to the message of the Pantheists. For my present purpose it is necessary to speak of them as a sect, but it would perhaps be more correct to speak of Pantheism as a tendency. Still what is meant may be made clear by the statement that while the Deists teach us to look up from nature to God, the Pantheists bid us see God in nature, and this in such a manner as to lead to an identification of God with

nature. Shelley has been described as the representative Pantheist among English poets. Hear Shelley's description of what he saw or thought he saw in nature:—

“ Nature's soul
That formed the earth so beautiful and spread
Earth's lap with plenty, and life's smallest chord
Strung to unchanging unison, that gave
The happy birds their dwelling in the grove ;
That yielded to the wanderers of the deep
The lovely silence of the unfathomed main,
And filled the meanest worm that crawls the earth
With spirit, thought, and love.”

So thoroughly and completely satisfied did he profess himself with the Spirit of Nature that he preferred the thought of it to the thought of a Father who gives good things to them that ask him:—

“ Unlike the God of human error, Thou
Requirest no prayers or praises.”

The phrases of admiration that have been heaped upon nature seem to me to express a kind of sentiment that may almost serve instead of a religion so long as a man has good health, an ample income, a pleasant home in a pretty country, and feels no anxiety about the

woes and sorrows of his brethren that is not sufficiently met by an annual subscription to the County Hospital. For such an one to see nature day by day in all the rich abundance of budding leaf and opening flower—to watch her graceful growth and new births out of old decays—may for a time suffice. But his is the vision of a glory that endureth but for a while and then vanisheth away.

Now before I call another witness to Nature's character, I just wish to sum up what those we have already examined have told us. The Deists, you will bear in mind, rejected the very thought of revelation on this ground, that they had all the theology man possibly could need without the trouble of opening the Bible. The Pantheists saw in the world itself the body of that stupendous whole, the soul whereof was God. There is this element common to both, that they assure us we have light enough: and it is simple matter of fact that not so very long ago it formed no small part of the office of the Christian apologist to shew that there

was room in this brilliantly illuminated earth for more light from heaven than Nature originally gave. But times have changed, and so have the weapons of war. If we had no other gospel in our hands than that gospel of nature which Deists and Pantheists have offered to us, we should be startled, alarmed, the very ground of all religious hope and trust would quake under our feet, as we read Mr Mill's terrible indictment against nature in the first of his *Three Essays on Religion*. Words seemed to have failed him—and he was no mean master of words—to express his sense of utter dissatisfaction with the home we live in, his righteous condemnation of Nature's doings. "In sober truth," he says, "nearly all the things which men are hanged or imprisoned for doing to one another are nature's everyday performances." He describes all manner of hideous deaths, and still the artillery of his attack is by no means exhausted. The pains of childbirth, the failure of crops, the destructiveness of floods and storms, explosions of fire-damp, visitations of

epidemics—all these missiles the positivist hurls with the might of his clear style and copious diction at the head of the Pantheist's goddess. "Talk to me no more of flowers and sunshine:" he seems to say: "half those pretty flowers are but painted poisons, sunstroke is but intensified sunshine."

I candidly confess that I think that we shall have to leave Pantheism and what Mr Mill in one place calls Sentimental Theism laid low by his energetic blows. He has in a very forcible way drawn attention to some features of life which the green earth and blue sky philosophers are apt to overlook. As I think of his words I am reminded of a passage in an old book which we all used to read as children, and which some of us read still: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." I make bold to say that no divine in Christendom could give us a more touching and a more striking comment on the subjection of creation

to the law of vanity, than one might gather from those essays of Mr Mill's. In fact, so far as his view of life on earth goes, one must class him with the prophetic Job and Ecclesiastes, rather than with the lordly Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke. I think it was Luther that said of Moses that he was the greatest of preachers, but that he had not the art of comforting poor sinners. So I think that we must say of Mr Mill that great as he may be among the expositors of the trouble to which man is born, his closest adherents cannot claim for him the art of inspiring hope. Let us thank God, my brethren, that there has come down to us a hope that stretches far across the interval of busy years to the restitution of all things: a hope that creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. And where have we this hope?

When Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, shew us the Father," Jesus did not answer, "You have lived all your life among the works of nature,

and have you not seen Him everywhere, Jehovah, Jove, or Lord?" He who could bid us learn a lesson of trustfulness from the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field, did not point to them as containing the clearest expression of the divine fatherhood, the strongest proofs of the thoughts toward us which are thoughts of peace. What He did say was this: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father: and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" After all our wanderings amid these contradictory philosophies, we come back to this old answer, for 'other refuge have we none.' If we would see the unseen Father, we must be humble students of His life who was the Word of the Father to a world that knew Him not, we must approach the most ancient of all mysteries with the gospel of the Life of Christ, our elder brother, in our hands. This gospel is the glass which brings the things of heaven within the range of earthly sight. So may we contemplate the

Father of Lights in and through that Son of God who is the Light that lighteneth every man. From Christ we may learn what we never could learn from the teachings of earth—whether rich with the promise of spring-tide, clad in her robe of summer beauty, laden with autumn's precious store, or draped in the white raiment of winter's snow. From Christ we may learn what sun and moon and starlit heaven can never teach. The thought that these put into one's mind is rather this, "Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him?" What is man amid the multitude of things created that Thou shouldst care for him, and come out of Thy place to visit and to bless him? But looking at Christ as the true Word of the divine counsels we learn to say: Lord, we thank Thee that Thou hast been mindful of man—mindful of us—loving and caring for each, as if there were but one—loving and caring for all, because there is room for all in a Father's heart. So in the grace of Him who though He was rich yet for our sakes became poor, we

learn to see the grace of God: in the love of Him who died and rose again for us, we learn to see the love of God. And from the thought of Philip's prayer, we rise to Paul's utterance of faith: "I am persuaded that neither death nor life shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord:" aye, and to Peter's anthem of praise: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope." Paul and Peter had seen the Father: they had seen Him in the Son.

II.

HOW CAN WE KNOW THE WAY?

(Fifth Sunday after Easter, 1876.)

ST JOHN XIV. 5, 6.

Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

AN eloquent speaker at one of the Church Congresses spoke of ours as “an age of longing desires and aching expectations.” I confess that I do not attach much importance to such apparent generalizations; so much depends in the formation of them upon the circumstances in which the speaker has been placed, upon the character of the society in

which he has principally mixed, upon the class of facts to which his attention has been mainly drawn, and even upon the natural temperament through which as through a coloured glass he takes his survey of men and things. An earnest voice from the midst of the fashionable world will probably tell us that luxury and self-indulgence are the prominent features of modern life, while an equally earnest voice from some busy commercial centre will assure us that "the narrowing lust of gold" is driving out all else from mind and heart. As an indication how largely our estimate is influenced by our pursuits and surroundings, just take this as a companion picture to that drawn by the Congress orator. It has been adduced not long ago as a sign of the old age of the world that "there is a marked tendency in the present day to take things as they are." This principle the writer describes as approving itself to the temperament of old age. "The pride of indifferentism retires into itself from the clamour of tongues.

Things are as they are!" The two pictures, you see, differ widely; the one is all eagerness, the other mainly weariness; the one is that of a man intently gazing into the unknown future; the other of one who scarcely cares to look beyond the columns of his daily paper. Which is true to fact? Probably both in a measure, for life and society are many-sided. Perhaps it is more true than we sometimes think that every generation of mankind can fairly take to itself such comfort as is afforded by the assurance that no trial is befalling it but such as is after the fashion and according to the measure of the average trials of humanity.

The more one thinks of what the men of the past have gone through in the way of longing desires and aching expectations, the less is one inclined to claim them as the property of a particular period. Century is bound to century by a closer bond and deeper tie than the continuity of time or the progress of discovery. From age to age the same

questions arise and like struggles are repeated in thousands of human hearts and minds. One generation passeth away and another cometh, but the earth—which is the birth-place of so many problems that find but partial solution here and of so many hopes that find but partial satisfaction here—the earth abideth for ever. Take your Bible in your hands, and turn to the book of Psalms. You have, Carlyle being witness, “in David’s life and history as written there the truest emblem ever given us of a man’s moral progress and warfare here below—the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul towards what is good and best.” Well, what do we find there? Certainly not a life all bright and a course all smooth. Hear two of his prayers: “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me; and art so far from my health, and from the words of my complaint?” and again, “Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God.”

Pass from the Psalms of David to the Con-

fessions of Augustine—a great leap this as to time, place, and circumstances—still we see the living link of common hopes and strivings. “Oh! for Thy mercies’ sake, tell me, O Lord my God, what Thou art unto me. Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. So speak, that I may hear. Behold, Lord, my heart is before Thee; open Thou the ears thereof, and say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. After this voice, let me haste and take hold on Thee. Hide not Thy face from me. Let me die—lest I die—only let me see Thy face.”

Time would fail me to speak of others into whose struggles and hopes we can in a measure enter because they have expressed them in writing, types of a multitude who have felt none the less because they were unable to hand down the record of their feelings to future generations of mankind, who have been inheritors of the longing desires and aching expectations of their spiritual forefathers, but not of David’s poetic gift or Augustine’s ready pen. They have had to

learn to hope even against hope—they have had to go through the cloud of doubt and difficulty and despair, and have feared as they entered into the cloud. It seems to me most important to insist upon this common feature in all the ages, else we shall miss the force of the testimony of the past to that power of living faith which raised its possessors above themselves. Take George Fox's record of one of his own experiences as an allegory of the Higher Life, and you have before you a biography which repeats itself many times in every generation. "One morning," he tells us, "as I was sitting by the fire a great cloud came over me, and a temptation beset me, and I sate still, and it was said, all things come by nature; and the elements and stars came over me so that I was in a manner quite clouded with it; but inasmuch as I sate still, and said nothing, the people of the house perceived nothing, and as I sate still under it and let it alone, a living hope arose in me, which cried: There is a living God

who made all things; and immediately the cloud and temptation vanished away; and life rose over it all, and my heart was glad, and I praised the living God."

I suppose that all of us who have thought at all seriously about man and human life have felt that chilly pressure, and probably have not found the passage from the spirit of heaviness to the spirit of praise quite so rapid in stern experience as in the mystic's reverie. Probably too we are conscious that such times have not been morally our worst times. It is worse for instance to think that we believe and to live as if we did not believe, than it is to question our beliefs. What I cannot but regard as a most unjust and therefore most impolitic mode of speech has found favour with many religious speakers and writers in regard of this point of the morality of doubt. They have represented the doubter as of necessity trying to make difficulties, as wishing the things of Faith unreal, in order that escaping the restraint

of Faith's morality he may give the world and the flesh free play. This imputation of base motive is of all things the most fatal to the prospect of anything like helpfulness. It is not by the aid of such physicians that souls enjoy "the sweet recovered infancy of faith." But while we are careful not to insult honesty, we should also be careful not to idolise mere indecision as such. There is apt to be, in the minds of young men in particular, a certain association of intellectual superiority with theological uncertainty, a tendency to take for granted that the man who disbelieves has gone deeper into the nature of the things proposed for belief than the man who believes. 'Thinkers' of a certain order find no doubt an agreeable flavour of progressiveness in not accepting what their grandfathers accepted. All this is the emptiest of folly—the vainest of conceit. A mind in suspense is not necessarily either more honest or more brilliant than a mind which is not in suspense. A statement is neither more nor less true because it has

what it is the fashion to call "historic interest." Still, admitting to the full the possibility of this unhealthy influence, one must also admit that amid the uncertainties of ethical methods and the perplexities that have their origin in extended physical research, there is abundant reason for the cry to arise from burdened hearts: How in this maze can we find the way to the Father? how can we learn to kneel down and pray with the old simplicity, "Give us and forgive us," and then rise from our knees upheld by the thought that we have indeed cast our care upon one who cares for us? Oh to carry manhood's load of anxious thoughts in the spirit of a little child, and to cast the burden upon the sustaining Lord! this were indeed a victory of faith, and it shall be achieved in proportion as we learn the fulness of meaning in that word of Christ to Thomas: I am the way, the truth, and the life.

Thomas had only once before come prominently forward in the gospel history. In

that incident we see his affectionate heart and despondent temper. When our Lord announced His resolution to go to Bethany in spite of the danger of the journey, it was Thomas who lovingly and despairingly exclaimed : "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." Hope of success had vanished from his heart, but not so the clinging affection which made him ready to be Christ's companion even unto death. "To die with Him"—the apostle little thought in that hour of his hopelessness, what a fruitful meaning that phrase would one day have. And now at the Last Supper, during the long farewell, his incredulity and love prompt him once again to speak. Christ indeed had said, "Let not your heart be troubled," but how could they help being troubled ? They had heard of the coming treachery of one of their number, of the failing faith of another, of the bitter separation, of the approaching departure. If they to whom such sad words were uttered had put to themselves the Psalmist's

question: Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? they would surely have found a ready answer in the words of Christ himself. Like so many times in the spiritual history of mankind, that was a time of "longing desires and aching expectations." "Whither I go, ye cannot come;" that word of preparation was a grievous word; it was too much for impetuous Peter to listen to without a protest: "Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards." Perhaps this very answer, seeming to single out one of their number as the future companion of the Lord, may have added to the disquiet of the rest. Perhaps they looked rather than uttered the question: And what, O Lord, of us? Hast Thou no reassuring word, no promise of renewed communion, for us? It is to such questioning thoughts that Christ recommends trust as the true heart's ease, trust in the Father and in Himself,

trust in the divine guardianship and care, trust in that unfolding of the eternal thought of love which was accomplished in the person of the Word made flesh. "You are in good hands," He tells them; "these things which look dark and depressing—this cloud of circumstance which gathers round you—shall pass away and give place to brighter experiences. Look onward through your sorrows and look upward through your tears. In my Father's house are many mansions." The emphatic word is many—room not for Christ alone, not for Christ and Peter alone, but for you all. There is no narrowness in the love of God, and still the gracious word that meets the wants of all generations is echoed as generation after generation passes to its grave: "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Oh for more hearty, simple, trustful coming! There is no scarcity of accommodation, no lack of welcome, in the home of many resting places. "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so

I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."

A living divine, who knows well how to turn the incidents of travel to account, tells us in his sketch of the life and character of Thomas of a statue of the apostle at Copenhagen representing him as "the thoughtful, meditative sceptic, with the rule in his hand for the due measuring of evidence and argument." It is quite in accordance with that conception of his character and temperament that he exclaimed: "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" It was with no hesitation, but with a supreme self-assertion that Jesus said unto him: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

We have here Christ's teaching on the

utility of religion and the method of the religious life. The juxtaposition of these phrases with the words of the text sounds a little incongruous; but I shall have failed altogether of my purpose unless I succeed in bringing together the thoughts which attach themselves to such phrases and those which spring from the contemplation of the old teaching.

“The utility of religion”—I can well imagine an unsophisticated Christian exclaiming, “Utility is conduciveness to an end, and the end of religion is coming to the Father, and religion itself is a journey to that Father’s home and Father’s heart, which all the children should aim at reaching. You can preach a sermon to me if you like on the utility of religion; but you might as well deliver a lecture to shew that life is useful to the body, or light to the eye, or health to the limbs.” I venture to think that at our best times we are all very much on the level of that unsophisticated Christian. Seeing,

however, that the eminent writer, to whom we were indebted last week for his testimony to Nature's character, has devoted a long essay to this special subject, there must be something more to be said about it than this. Taking as his position that the whole duty of man is to make life as pleasant as possible to them who do and shall possess it—he proceeds to examine in what way religion has contributed to this end, and to inquire whether there are any recognised forces in human life, less liable to suspicion and mistrust, which can do the work equally well. Possibly, he suggests, examination may shew that it is not worth while to be at the trouble of "propping up beliefs," as the same faculties that this operation requires might yield a greater return in human well-being if otherwise employed. The temporal usefulness of religion is then the subject of inquiry. What does religion do for society, and what for the individual? Now I shall just read to you the passage with which Mr Mill commences his

answer to the former question, and I will ask your careful attention to it, as we shall want it again presently. "To speak first, then, of religious belief as an instrument of social good. We must commence by drawing a distinction most commonly overlooked. It is usual to credit religion as such with the whole of the power inherent in any system of moral duties inculcated by education and enforced by opinion. Undoubtedly mankind would be in a deplorable state if no principles or precepts of justice, veracity, beneficence, were taught publicly or privately, and if these virtues were not encouraged, and the opposite vices repressed, by the praise and blame, the favourable and unfavourable sentiments of mankind. And since nearly everything of this sort which does take place, takes place in the name of religion; since almost all who are taught any morality whatever, have it taught to them as religion, and inculcated on them through life principally in that character; the effect which the teaching produces as teaching, it is sup-

posed to produce as religious teaching, and religion receives the credit of all the influence in human affairs which belongs to any generally accepted system of rules for the guidance and government of human life."

I wish you to bear the drift of that passage in mind: much of what follows is an analysis of the influence which such generally accepted teaching exercises.

It will be only necessary for my present purpose to put this before you in very brief outline. We are asked to consider, first, the enormous influence of authority on the human mind—its involuntary influence, its effect on men's convictions, on their persuasion, on their involuntary sentiments.

The second element in the analysis is the tremendous power of education. People in general have been taught from their earliest years to accept some kind of religious belief, and to regard some precepts of conduct as having divine authority. Mr Mill argues that any system of social duty which mankind

might adopt, might have the same advantage of early inculcation that religious morality now has—and this he aims at proving by the consideration that the commands of God cannot be to young children anything more than the commands of their parents. I think, however, that he has here overlooked the immense power which a parent's command has to influence the child's will when it is looked upon as having the sanction of divine authority. The child may take on trust from its parent its opinion as to what is, and what is not, right in the sight of God: but it by no means follows that the parent can supply any other moral influence equally strong with that which is implied in that distinction. Of course if the distinction itself were proved to be false, then the advantage gained by it should be surrendered: only we ought not to be told that the "same advantage" would remain.

The third and last power enumerated is that of public opinion, and this we are told

is a source of strength inherent in any system of moral belief which is generally adopted, whether connected with religion or not. Potent indeed according to the estimate before us is this instrument for moving men. The love of glory, the love of praise, the love of sympathy, the fear of shame, the dread of exclusion from social intercourse and good offices, the whole range of ambition, even the pleasure of self-approbation, are all intimately connected with the sentiments of our fellow-creatures. Higher still is the place assigned to public opinion in human affairs; we are told that "it generally makes conscience, and conscience consequently generally agrees with it"—that "religion has been powerful, not by its own intrinsic force, but because it has wielded this additional and more mighty power." Let us, then, suppose that we have these three tremendous powers — authority, education, public opinion—ready to enforce upon popular attention and popular practice some code of morality at present unknown.

We are to regard these as not requiring the aid of religion to make themselves felt and to induce obedience to their commands. Belief in the supernatural has, according to this view of it, now done its work. As a matter of history, no doubt religion and morality have come down to us hand in hand; but the question before us is: Need they continue any longer in this close alliance? Cannot people be taught to be merciful, without the old reason being given, "because your Father which is in heaven is merciful"? Cannot people be taught to love their brethren without the establishment of any association between that affection and the love of God? When once the world has got hold of moral truths which commend themselves and moral rules which work well, is it likely to let them slip? Cannot these be trusted to retain their influence over us quite independently of the form which their influence originally took? I think that these questions fairly represent the course of the argument upon this point.

But I must give you his conclusion in his own words. "Belief, then, in the supernatural, great as are the services which it rendered in the early stages of human development, cannot be considered to be any longer required, either for enabling us to know what is right and wrong in social morality, or for supplying us with motives to do right and to abstain from wrong."

I do not propose to follow the second part of the inquiry—that, namely, into the utility of religion to the individual, embracing such points as these—what it is in man which makes him want a religion, what cravings of the human mind religion supplies, and what qualities it develops. It may perhaps strike you that the principles of induction would naturally suggest to us the fitness of our consulting those familiar with the phenomenon if we wish to learn such practical matters as these concerning it—men for instance like Paul or Peter or John; and that in order to vary the circumstances, we should take men

of different times, of different positions, of different tastes, and try in this manner to ascertain, so far as we can ascertain from the testimony of others, what prayer and trust and a spirit of thanksgiving can do for a man. The Logic books tell us of the great advantage which the method of experiment has over the method of observation. We should therefore do wisely not to attach very great importance to the opinion of speculators whose point of view is outside the range of the particular experience concerning which we desire to form a judgment. The reader of this essay of Mr Mill's, while he reads, may well be asking himself: What has become of forgiveness and help and guidance and blessing? He may well doubt whether that new Supreme Being—that abstraction of humanity, which the positivist would fain enthrone in human hearts—ever can have the same claims upon our reverence and love which the God of the Christian, upon the showing of the Gospel, has upon his reverence and love; and

possibly he may come to the conclusion that he will be able to learn more of what religion can do for the individual by conferring with some poor bed-ridden cripple, whom faith in the wise workings of a God of love has made patient and hopeful in his lot, than by the study of the most acute of psychologists or the most brilliant of essayists. Those who undertake to tell men what they want faith in the Divine for, and to press upon them the conclusion that they can do very well without it, ought surely to be extremely careful to take well into account the great variety of facts in human life. I am not aware that any manual of pastoral visitation has been put forth for the use of the priests of the religion of humanity, but I have often wondered what they would have to say to a dying man, who had wasted his energies, used his neighbours merely as instruments for his private gratification, and by excess and debauchery brought himself to an untimely end. His share in the realisation of an earthly ideal

is perhaps not a profitable topic of conversation or contemplation. I should be rather at a loss how to begin to stir him up to a religious sympathy with the humanity of the year 2000 beyond the expression of a not very consoling hope that by that date there would be fewer such as he on earth. Now a certain old story which tells of the welcome given by a loving father to a penitent child upon his return from a far-off land does give one a starting-point. But it is a person to person and heart to heart story that. Perhaps after all religion has supplied some other wants than that which Mr Mill tells us it supplies in common with poetry—the want, namely, of “ideal conceptions grander and more beautiful than we see realised in the prose of human life.” That sounds very pretty, but human life is full of some such very stern varieties of prose, that it is difficult to see how conceptions merely derived from itself can ever supply its needs. Possibly then, there may be some elements of utility in religion that

have escaped Mr Mill's dissection. But we must return to that more popular and every day part of the analysis of the influence of religion. You will bear in mind that we have been asked to dissociate from religion the thought of these three great forces—authority, education, public opinion—and to imagine them brought to bear upon some morality that is not religious. One naturally asks, What morality? I have been lately taught to regard myself as an officer in “a great national society for the promotion of goodness,” and so the inquiry is forced again upon me: Where is this goodness to be found?

Now it so happens that one, whose ability for such a task and candour in the execution of it it would be the merest impertinence for me to extol before a Cambridge congregation, has lately had in review the various methods by which it is possible to frame a rule of life. Into the evidence in favour of the recognition of a religious sanction he does not

profess to enter, and his testimony to its necessity is therefore all the more valuable. Hear the conclusion of the whole matter, as it is stated for us by the author of the *Methods of Ethics*: “The old immoral paradox, ‘that my performance of social duty is good, not for myself, but for others,’ cannot be refuted by empirical arguments: nay, the more we study these arguments the more we are forced to admit, that if we have these alone to rely on, there must be some cases in which the paradox is true. And yet we cannot but admit with Butler, that it is ultimately reasonable to seek one’s own happiness. Hence the whole system of our beliefs as to the intrinsic reasonableness of conduct must fall, without a hypothesis unverifiable by experience reconciling the individual with the universal reason, without a belief in some form or other, that the moral order which we see imperfectly realised in this actual world is yet actually perfect.” Now just consider what this amounts to: we are here told, and

as I believe told truly, that in order to get a right and reasonable basis for conduct, a basis which shall reconcile the sometimes conflicting claims of myself and my neighbours, I must fall back upon that very religious sanction which Mr Mill has been teaching me to do without, in other words, upon the thought of God.

Things are thus brought pretty nearly to a dead lock. The prophet of positivism has assured us that we should approach more rapidly towards the realisation of a morality founded on large and wide views of the general good if we dismissed the gods, and adopted a code that did not pretend to be in any sense more than human. And then after all it turns out upon inquiry from one whose studies have well qualified him to form an opinion, that we must fall back upon that religious idea if only to reconcile the conflicting claims and interest of one single human life. One may well ask amid these differing doctors : What morality ? What goodness ?

I know not how the matter looks to you, but I seem to see it as in a vision thus: I have been ushered as a workman into a spacious printing office, where stand three presses of enormous power, which, as one who has studied the trade informs me, are capable of impressing the most valuable lessons of conduct, whereby the earth is to be made brighter and man better, upon the material afforded by the minds of the rising generations and of all generations which have yet to rise. Some of the workers in the office are anxious to push the work on, for it is a peculiarity of the material there employed that it rapidly becomes unavailable for our processes. We suddenly discover to our dismay that the type is not yet set up, and not even has a manuscript been received which commands general assent. We think that our best plan under these trying circumstances is to make diligent inquiry among them who have made the manuscripts of rules of life their study. We are fortunate in finding one

who has not only studied actually existing manuscripts, but has been at great pains to think out some plan whereby the merits of conflicting manuscripts may be combined; and he frankly tells us that the combination is possible only by means of an unverifiable hypothesis. Well; what are we to do? I think we had better make the hypothesis. Nay; we have not to make the hypothesis: it is part of our rich heritage as members of the Church of Christ: it has come down to us endorsed by the signatures of the best and noblest of our race: the hypothesis is supplied by faith in God, and accepting that as our ground, we go to work at our printing with that best of manuscripts—the Gospel of the Son of God. Now I am far from wishing to underrate the importance of the discussion of hypotheses, but it is important to bear this in mind, that while the discussion is yet going on, strange as it may appear, the world is going on too; children are being born and brought up, men and women are living and

dying. It is admitted on all hands that these three mighty powers—authority, education, public opinion—if they are to do good work, want “a system of moral duties, principles or precepts of justice, veracity, beneficence,” and it appears that to get these into reasonable shape, we must in the long run fall back upon theology; we must in some sense say with Philip, “Shew us the Father;” and when nature puzzles us, and our own thoughts perplex us, when the doubt within is saying, We know not whither, We know not the way, let us be thankful that we are the heirs of a message that tells us the way, and tells us the whither also. Jesus said unto Thomas, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.”

We are thus brought by another path to the same goal that we reached last week—then by way of thought about nature, now by way of thought about human conduct. I do not apologise for the sameness of the jour-

ney's end, for if twenty routes brought us there, it would be no matter of regret. We have again to confess that we do not find things in harmony with a perfect design in this life of mingled good and ill, that there are a thousand problems which the clearest brain tries in vain to work out—a thousand difficulties which a fool can raise and the united wisdom of the wise cannot remove. But we have not these problems and these difficulties to face for the first time in the life of the world. Consider once more the case of those first disciples. It was indeed true of them that "without were fightings, within were fears." The order of nature and the designs of Providence were dark before them. Sorrow and doubt were mingled in their minds. The burden of life's questions was weighing them down, and they could not see their path, but trials were lightened and guidance was given when the Master said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." And

accordingly we turn to the uplifted cross and the empty grave of Christ in order that we may learn there the secret of the moral disorders of the world, and the purpose of its Maker in regard to them. The cross of Christ is the standing witness in history to the nature of sin: His resurrection to the design of Him who said, "Behold, I make all things new." I know not how to meet that charge against our Maker that this world is not such as an Almighty God of goodness could have made, except by looking at it thus in the light of the revelation of His purposes in Jesus Christ. By His cross and by His grave, by His humiliation and by His triumph, He manifests Himself as the Way to the Father. To Him therefore we would look amid trials and difficulties—to Him, the great burden-bearer of the human family, exalted now to be a Prince and a Saviour. By reason of His relation to redeemed humanity, as the head to the members, as the vine to the branches, He collects the various ages and the various races of man-

kind into one whole as the positivist abstraction never can, and through Him the light of the Father's countenance shines forth upon the world. Travelling by Him as our way, accepting Him as the real in a world of appearances, receiving Him into ourselves as the very life of our souls, we can well believe,

Although no tongue can prove,
That every cloud that spreads above
And veileth Love, itself is Love.

Justified in our hope by His glorious victory, encouraged by the testimony of many witnesses to the power He has proved Himself to be in them, strong in His strength because we are one with Him and He with us, we may look forward with glad anticipation to the eternal verification of faith's hypothesis, when the "kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ."

III.

WHY CANNOT I FOLLOW THEE NOW?

(Ascension Day, 1876.)

ST JOHN XIII. 36—38.

Simon Peter said unto Him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.

Peter said unto Him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

WHITHER? Why cannot I? We know not: How can we know? Shew us: How is it? Expressions like these occurring

in the text, and in the chapter immediately following, have shewn us how busily the spirit of inquiry was at work in the mind of the Twelve at this crisis of their lives when their Master was about to leave them; and the answers returned by our Lord have furnished us with specimens of the methods of teaching employed by the Great Teacher. We see the chosen companions of the Lord not in their capacity as teachers, but as learners; not as dogmatists, but as doubters; seeking, if haply they might find, some truth of being—some clear principle of living—upon which they could keep their eye, and which would act as guiding-star to them while they steered through wave and cloud and storm.

You will remember that St James thought it well to remind his readers that a certain prophet was a man subject to like passions with themselves; we have, I think, seen reason to believe that the same statement holds true of the apostles and ourselves. We are their successors in the spiritual heritage of desires yet unsatis-

fied and hopes yet unfulfilled: we have not attained, neither are already perfect; and our wisdom is still to be following after. One of the greatest teachers of the English Church in later years has bidden us—not without a touch of irony—to observe “how careful the Apostles are to impress us with this fact, which wise men, who do not in general consider them trustworthy authorities, are also so anxious to impress us with, that they were very stupid people,—on a level with the most stupid. Thus they shew that the great experiment of what man is, and what he is meant for, was made *in corpore vili*, so that none could say ‘This lesson is not for me; I cannot claim to be a spiritual being, and to be risen and ascended with Christ.’” Now what is there said about stupidity is pretty much what I have been trying in two former sermons to say about perplexity. The evangelist—I will not say is careful to shew, for that would imply design—but certainly does shew us himself and his colleagues pretty much on a level with the most per-

plexed. If his sketch had been the result of design, he would have deserved to rank as a dramatist of the highest order—so full is it of ‘touches of nature.’ As it is, it bears upon it the marks of a conversation recorded with considerable accuracy. In the apostles we see that every-day phenomenon, human nature: in the answers of Christ to their questions we have what professes to be guidance to that which human nature needs—a sight of the Father, a way to the Father. One thing we can say with tolerable certainty, that other guidance has failed us and is failing us. Observation of nature has not shewn us the Father. Speculation about human conduct has not told us the way to the Father. Christ warned us long ago that these other epiphanies and other guidances would fail, when he said, “No man cometh unto the Father but by me”—so that, as Christians, we need not feel the least alarm or even surprise at the collapse of nature’s testimony when men try to find in it the supreme manifestation of the divine, or at the inability of

the various methods of Ethics to supply a consistently thought-out and harmoniously developed rule of life. Perhaps Jesus told us these things before they came to pass, that now that they are come to pass, we might believe. I have a great dread of the use of the dilemma in the discussion of the things of the spirit, for it is so often a mere piece of logical fence; therefore I only put what I am going to say as a matter of personal conviction without any wish unduly to force the two alternatives: I think that the higher thought about life and conduct is bringing us to a choice between Christ or Nothing; and that if we reject Christ, we must, since there is at all events one person in the universe concerning whose appetites and desires we can feel no doubt, descend to an altogether lower level, put Self on the throne of our hearts, and in all the meanness of self-worship adopt in its narrowest form the ancient maxim of the widespread sect of the self-pleasers, with such refinements indeed in the mode of expression as

an age of culture can suggest : "Let me eat and drink, for to-morrow I die." I say again that I have no wish unduly to press this dilemma. I only speak of a tendency which I think that I have traced in books and seen working among men.

So much then by way of conclusion to our consideration of the share in this wonderful conversation borne by Philip and Thomas. Ascension Day carries our thoughts from the way to the Father to the journey itself—Christ's journey and our journey. It brings with emphasis to our minds those jubilant words of our creed-like hymn :

When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death : thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Thou sittest at the right hand of God : in the glory of the Father.

I hope that the short dialogue between Peter and his Lord which I read just now may furnish us with some lessons not inappro-

priate to the festival which we are observing. Perhaps there is not one of the twelve of whose character we seem to have a clearer photograph in the sacred writings than we have of St Peter's. It is very likely not the character that attracts us most, but it may be the one that we can see best. He has some of the qualities of a leader of men—zeal, energy, promptitude: he has the grand quality of warmth of heart; but he is apt to shew himself unduly self-confident and so to run great moral risks. His was a nature which needed much discipline, and what it needed, it received—aye, even the discipline of bitter tears. It is the same Peter, and yet how changed, who in later life can write such touching exhortations to vigilance and patience as we read in the First Epistle which bears his name.

The text contains one of many lessons which Christ gave to Peter in the difficult art of self-knowledge: “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” Jesus had just announced His approaching departure—

and this in strange words which told of a glory that was to come. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me, and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you."

Curiosity and love combine to loosen Peter's ready tongue: "Lord, whither goest thou?" I wonder what conjectures were busy in his mind. Perhaps he did not quite like that mention of glorification and separation: were they who had shared his humility to be denied a share in his glory? Perhaps he longed to prevent, if possible, the sad loss that was threatening him and the little company of which he was so prominent a member. Perhaps he was meditating the possibility of his keeping near to his Master himself, whatever others did. That our Lord understood him to express his great desire to unite his future in

some way or other with His own is clear from the indirectness of the answer which was given: "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards." Just think what the answer might have told had it been direct. "Through the grave and gate of death," our Lord might have said, "to a life lived on earth under new conditions, and then to the upper glory, whither I shall carry with me the experiences gathered during the time I have borne human griefs and carried human sorrows; and thus I shall give my brethren upon earth the assurance of a sympathy that is something more than pity; by this sign and token I shall inspire them with an undying hope as to the future that lies before them."

A beautiful story—a kind of half-story, half-dream—that comes to us from another land, describes how the Angel of the Last Hour, whom men harshly call Death, is chosen from among the mildest and gentlest of angelic beings, in order that he may with com-

passionate tenderness withdraw life from the sinking heart of man, and convey it with gentle care from the cold bosom of earth into the genial regions of the heavenly Paradise. This Angel of our Last Hour is pictured as busily employed where lie battle-fields full of blood and suffering in drawing forth the trembling souls of the slain warriors; and at length exclaiming, his eye meanwhile dimmed with tears, "I will for once die like a mortal, that I may feel his dying pangs, and know the better how to soothe him whilst I dissolve his life." Carrying out this thought of love the heavenly messenger descends upon a battle-field, and entering the body of a dying youth, undergoes the strange experiences of earthly life, appetite, pain, sleep, dream, sorrow. He is shocked by contact with unfeeling men, shocked at their unjust dealings, their crimes, their disordered passions. At length excitement of feeling reopens the wound of the battle-field, a dark cloud passes over him, all is night, he is heavy with sleep, he dies. At first he mistakes the new-

born glory of heaven's own light for the deceptive illusions of a dream. But the Angel of the First Hour, whose office it is to welcome new-comers as to earth so to heaven, gives him the appointed sign, and says, "That was Death, thou immortal brother and heavenly friend."

As we read that fiction of an angelic love, our thoughts surely turn to Him of whom it is written, "One in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels: thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him."—as though he had said, We see this lord of creation not yet come into his fair inheritance of power; he is the sport of every wind of circumstance, the victim of disease and death: but, he adds with a hope-

inspiring word for the future of humanity, we see Jesus—the Head and King of humanity in whom we all are one—Jesus, the satisfaction of eyes that desire to see and of hearts that yearn for rest—“we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” If instead of asking Peter’s question, “Lord, whither goest thou?” we ask, as on this day, Lord, whither wentest thou? Faith puts into our mouths this answer, that we have a great High Priest—representing the fulfilment of all human strivings after the good and best—that is passed into the heavens.

It is as the completion of the Resurrection-triumph, as forming indeed a part of it, that we most easily approach the consideration of our Lord’s Ascension. Indeed we may fairly say that unless this final act of exaltation had added to the renewed life a brightness not of earth, the Resurrection would scarcely have been a triumph. In one of these essays to

which I have so often referred, Mr Mill suggests the probability that—even supposing a much longer duration of life than at present prevails—“after a length of time different in different persons, all would have had enough of existence, and would gladly lie down and take their eternal rest.” I think that we might go further than that, and say that supposing there were no Ascension, that is to say, supposing the conditions of living were unchanged and the law of subjection to vanity were a law that altered not, this probability might be regarded as a moral certainty. It is not uncommon to find people who have had “enough of this existence,” who if the Angel of Death were to give them their choice between to-morrow and next year would answer, Let me depart in peace to-morrow. They have indeed had enough of that weakness and worry, that failure of vitality and dependence upon others, which are the inseparable concomitants of old age. But this is a far different thing from being weary of a life lived in a body like to

the body of Christ's glory and occupied in endless contemplation of the works and ways of God.

We would then regard the Ascension of Christ as the pledge of the glory of the future. The Religion of Humanity sets an indefinite earthly progress of our race before it as its glory. The Faith of the Ascension raises and exalts this conception and contemplates it in the light of a divine idea, which has corresponding to it a fact in the departure of our Lord from earth. So the Ascension has been well described as "the substantiation of an idea in a fact." The idea is supplied by all our hopes for better things for ourselves and for our neighbours—our longings for more light and more love—for more purity within, for more brotherhood around: the fact is supplied in the glorification of the Head of that body whereof we and our neighbours are members.

It is thus that the uncertain hope of a future, which Mr Mill tells us Science is

competent neither to affirm nor to deny, is elevated from what writers of another school would call a pious opinion into an article of Faith. We believe that Jesus Christ our Lord ascended into the heavens, and that in this we have the divine pledge that the rough places shall one day be made plain, and the crooked things put straight. It is indeed easy to ridicule popular conceptions of a future life, but one may well question whether it is worth while; it is surely a higher work to raise them. And even the ridicule sometimes misses its mark. For instance, take this description from a well-known pen:—"With many, the common conception of a future state of bliss is that of a kind of middle-class home, with labour ended, the table spread, goodness all around, the lost ones restored, hymnody incessant. 'Poor fragments all of this low earth!' Keble might well say." And then the writer adds "That this conception of immortality cannot possibly be true we feel, the moment we consider it seriously; and yet who

can devise any conception of a future state of bliss which shall bear close examination any better?" Surely after reading that description and that challenge, the officers of the society for the spread of goodness will not pretend any longer to be officers of a society for the promotion of Christian Knowledge—so far at least as anticipation of the future is concerned. It may perhaps appear too bold—before venturing at all upon attempting to raise the conception—to try to justify that picture of a middle-class home. Still it is just possible that the shaft of criticism may over-reach its mark, and while aimed only at the mean conceptions of our paltry imaginations may strike at the deepest feelings of that human nature which the Great Teacher did not despise.

First of all then I will be bold to say that there is more true philosophy and more thorough culture in the old thought—Home is home—than in any sneer at the thought of heaven as home. There is nothing unworthy in the belief that the true home for filial spirits is in that

house of the Father of spirits where are many resting-places.

But we will examine the picture in some of its details. Here is one, "Labour ended." Probably the hymns of the Christian Church have done more than any other agency to form the popular conception of future bliss, and possibly among recent writers of hymns Keble has had more influence than any other. It is no part of my design to defend either Keble's poetry or theology, but I confess that I fail entirely to see anything absurd in the concluding stanzas of the poem for All Saints' Day:—

On, champions blest, in Jesus' name;
Short be your strife, your triumph full,
Till every heart have caught your flame,
And, lighten'd of the world's misrule,
Ye soar those elder saints to meet,
Gather'd long since at Jesus' feet,
No world of passions to destroy,
Your prayers and struggles o'er, your task all praise and joy.

And yet here surely is "labour ended." The poet seems to me to have caught well the force

of that combination: "They rest from their labours," and, "They rest not day and night."

We will take other features of the home: "Goodness all around, the table spread." When one thinks of the mischief wrought by badness in the homes of earth, how unworthy suspicions and idle words often poison the very well-springs of social life, one utterly fails to see the point of the satire. And when again our thoughts turn to that participation in the strength of the higher life and in the power of the unseen world, which is associated in a certain simple and solemn ordinance with such commonplace things as eating and drinking, a table spread becomes surely not a mere condescension to the needs of this low earth of which a spirit ought to be ashamed, but rather a type of a rich supply of that food which a spiritual nature needs: and one thinks how such things looked to the eye of an old hymn writer:—"Thou shalt prepare a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou hast anointed my head with oil and my cup run-

neth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." And in like manner Christ has taught us not to despise the human and the earthly, but to look upon them as consecrated to be the mystery and sacrament of the divine and heavenly.

Let me add one word about another feature of that home—"the lost ones restored." We will compare the opinion not of a poet or divine on this detail in the arrangements of that conception of a home above, but we will once more ask Mr Mill, with his tender human heart in the midst of all his scepticism, what he has to say about it: "Nor can I perceive," he says, in the essay on the Utility of Religion, "that the sceptic loses by his scepticism any real and valuable consolation except one; the hope of reunion with those who have ended their earthly life before him. That loss, indeed, is neither to be denied nor extenuated. In many cases it is beyond the reach of comparison or estimate; and will always suffice to keep

alive, in the more sensitive natures, the imaginative hope of a futurity which, if there is nothing to prove, there is as little in our knowledge and experience to contradict."

Mr Mill, as I scarcely need say, was not disposed, either by hereditary tendencies or early education, to any great excess of over-belief, but even he failed entirely to see the absurdity of that element in the popular ideal of a future state—the restoration of the lost ones, and seems to have felt tenderly towards that one remnant of comfort to be discerned in the creed which tells us of a life everlasting. I have spent more time over that sketch of a popular conception than it deserves, but I have done so in the hope of impressing upon some of my hearers this one rule of criticism, though I am far from professing the critic's art: when you come across any piece of cultivated banter, just take it to pieces and see what it is made of, before you allow it to influence your mental attitude towards the things which are of faith. Although I should be sorry to substitute other concep-

tions of an ascended state for such as are derived from the thought of a home of goodness and plenty and reunion and praise, I may be allowed to try to supplement them. Those who talk to us in our present state of the folly of trying to fathom the depths of the Unknown and Unknowable, and who would at the same time encourage us in the pursuit of all the knowledge within our reach, ought surely to be the last persons in the world to find any difficulty in imagining occupations for the life to come. The tracing of the divine idea in all history, aye, and in every biography, and the consequent justification of the ways of God to man: the revelation of His working in other worlds than ours—worlds perhaps unstained by sin—worlds where we should find a Trinity of Father, Word and Companion, rather than of Father, Redeemer and Comforter—worlds where we should find the Divine Unity of Source of Love and Object of Love and Spirit of Love prevailing over every other manifestation of the Eternal Essence—world after world telling

each a new story, and yet each warranting the same conclusion that God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all—why, my brethren, instead of its being difficult to devise a conception, it is surely difficult to set bounds to one's imagination in the way of visions of possible unveilings. The Festival of the Ascension is, then, the anticipation of an immortality in which God shall be His own interpreter.

Let us look at it again for a moment in its bearing upon the future of mankind in general. Divines guard us against mistaking the Ascension for the apotheosis of a man: may we then venture to escape the possibility of that error by looking upon it as the apotheosis of humanity, as containing in it the promise of the fulfilment of our highest hopes for that whole family for which Christ died? We have been lately told, and although the objection is not new, it may come to some minds with new force, that “there is one moral contradiction inseparable from every form of Christianity, which no ingenuity can resolve, and no sophistry explain away. It

is that so precious a gift, bestowed on a few, should have been withheld from the many: that countless millions of human beings should have been allowed to live and die, to sin and suffer, without the one thing needful, the divine remedy for sin and suffering, which it would have cost the Divine Giver as little to have vouchsafed on all, as to have bestowed by special grace upon a favoured minority."

This whole objection proceeds upon the supposition that the mind of God in regard to man depends upon man's knowledge of that mind. But is it clear that the work of Christ for us, and those divine thoughts which the work embodied, depend altogether upon our becoming acquainted with that work in the few years of our earthly life? St Paul seems to have thought not: "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." It has been very much the custom to think and speak of the gospel as the revelation of a medicine for our soul's sickness: surely it is quite as admissible to regard it as the

revelation of a divine fact which acts medicinally upon our moral natures because it is a divine fact. What if the love of God in Christ for all men be absolutely a fact—relatively to them who learn it a healing power? Then we may very hopefully leave such as have not the opportunity of learning the news, and so enjoying its healing power, to the healing power of the fact itself in some other manifestation of it, for the truth must be greater than our knowledge of the truth. I think that there is neither ingenuity nor sophistry in this. It only amounts to saying that if God is Love, He is so whether we know it or not; that if we have an High Priest which can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, we have whether we know it or not. And so while we pray that from Jew, Turk, Infidel and Heretic, all ignorance and hardness of heart may be taken away; while we labour for the spread of the glad tidings of our Father's mind toward us and of our Father's Home for us far and wide, we may at the same time confess with no misgiving that

our best hopes for all men gather round our risen Lord.

Such then are some of the aspects in which our Lord's Ascension presents itself in its relation to a few of the things that men talk about and write about. Let me try, in conclusion, to fix some practical lesson which may correct errors in our way of looking at our every-day lives. We may, I think, find this in Peter's second question and our Lord's answer to it : "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now ? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus saith unto him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake ? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice." What had the denial to do with the delay in the following ? Surely this : that the apostle had much of life's lesson still to learn ; that he had by experience of weakness to acquire distrust of self and trust in God. The self-confident man had need of the humbling experience of self's failure. Self had to be brought to the test of persecuting scorn, and with what

result his bitter sorrow for his sin told full well. Peter found life what Butler calls "a state of probation, as implying trial, difficulties, and danger." But he found it too something better and higher than a state of probation. Probation is not an end in itself, but an instrument of education. A paper of questions is not set to a pupil merely to find out whether or not he can answer them—that were probation, but in order that he may learn how to answer them—and there comes in the higher end of education. Peter was not put into circumstances of trial, difficulty and danger—the circumstances in which he denied his Master thrice—merely in order that the weakness of his mortal nature might be brought to light, but in order that knowing his weakness he might seek strength and no longer trust in the strength of his own heart.

Let us look at our lives on earth in the light of that higher end of education. Then shall this life—with its hopes and fears, its doubts and questionings, its failures and follies,

its sorrows and its sins—be the leader of our childhood to the Eternal Light which shall explain all things. Then shall the bright features which here are mingled with the dark—the happiness of home and the joys of friendship, the pleasures of labour and the pleasures of rest—be all transfigured before us into prophetic symbols of the ascended life. It is not given to us to know all the conditions of that bliss, but surely in this wide universe of God's there is room for Christ and them that are Christ's, there is scope for a clearer vision and a fuller knowledge than are ours below. Seeing, then, that we are one with Christ, and therefore risen with him, let us in hope of the glory be seeking the things which are above—the righteousness and peace and joy which dwell for ever in the Father's house.

IV.

TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?

(Sexagesima Sunday, 1879.)

ST JOHN vi. 66—68.

*From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.
Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?*

Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.

THE record of an apostasy must always be rather a sad piece of reading. The abandonment of principles even when they have been proved false, the desertion of a leader even when he has shewn himself unworthy to lead—imply a kind of farewell to one's past self,

a giving up of familiar habits of thought and feeling, which must have a painful element in them to all but the lovers of novelty for novelty's sake. Such abandonment and desertion imply disappointment ; and disappointment is one of the most unpleasant of those unpleasant things which make up the sum of human trouble. It is easier to bear pain when one has made up one's mind to it than it is when it comes in the place of an anticipated pleasure. No doubt the disciples mentioned in the text as walking no more with Christ had expected to find in Him something which they did not find, and perhaps had found something which they did not expect. Discipleship was not suited to their tastes as they came to hear and to see more of the Master. They were disappointed, and a melancholy procession they must have made as they went back. If we ask the causes of this desertion of Christ in the time of His public ministry, we shall probably be justified in assigning these two at all events. First, the demand which our Lord made upon His fol-

lowers for personal self-surrender—I mean such self-surrender as is implied in trusting Him. Very likely many among them would readily have undertaken a definite task, but this was not set before them as the one test of their sincerity. Jesus had said unto them, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." The great question between Faith and Works, which has been so frequently and so fiercely debated among the followers of Christ, was present to the minds of that Jewish crowd in one of its earliest forms: and surely it was determined there for them who had ears to hear by the voice of Christ Himself. To trust Him as the Word of God—the utterance of the Divine mind on earth—this was the grand test of discipleship, and by this test sooner or later must all discipleship be tested. They were not to do certain works in an experimental kind of way—to see if any good came to their souls from the doing of them: that was not the method of spiritual healing: but they were to open their hearts to the heavenly influence of

redeeming love, and from the heart that had been thus opened and thus filled, it was certain as the law of cause and effect, there would be the issue of a life cleansed and consecrated. But the many were not prepared to receive this—the teaching of Christ, and after him of Paul and Luther in his name, and so they went back. They had not expected this demand upon them. It is probable, too, that they had not found what they did expect. The nation just at that time was more intent upon politics than upon ethics. They were more anxious for the reform of society than for that of their own individual selves. This feature was not indeed peculiar to them or to their age. Some sweeping change of the conditions under which he lives has often more attractions for a man than a change for the better in the life he lives. So it was in our Lord's day—thousands would have welcomed the hope of speedy deliverance from the galling yoke of Rome, comparatively few were eager to secure emancipation from the slavery of sin and an inheritance among

the pure in heart. I am very much afraid that we are frequently very much like those Jews. We persuade ourselves that things would mend if only this or that measure of reform were passed, forgetful that genuine improvement must begin at home—aye, and very much at home—within the heart. I should think that its demand for faith, an internal principle, and the stress it laid upon individual renewal, an internal necessity, were two features in our Lord's teaching which caused the apostasy of many disciples. To them the Word of God proved itself a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It did not suit their tastes, and so they walked no more with Him who spake it.

“Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?” It may be that the Redeemer's humanity craved some assurance of companionship and sympathy: or it may be that he was just educating the little band of chosen followers, leading them on to such a full and hearty confession as would itself act as a tonic

to their faith. The eager Peter—affectionate at heart and ready of tongue—speaks as the spokesman of the company. Then Simon Peter answered, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”

To whom might they have gone, if they had left Christ? Then, as now, a choice of system lay before the enterprising mind. If they, like their late companions, had failed to appreciate the inwardness of the words of Christ—their power to set crooked things really straight by going right to the source of crookedness—the twelve had nigh at hand other guides whom they might have followed. If they had had a leaning towards precision of system, and the small details of a casuistical regulation of conduct, Pharisaic tutors might have welcomed them to their lecture-rooms. There the deserters might have been initiated into the intricate mysteries of an elaborate tradition. They might have been instructed in the exact moral force of the word Corban: they might have ascertained the supposed advantages of various

phylacteries ; nice distinctions between what was clean and what was unclean, learned disquisitions on the lighting of candles and the preparations of food on the Sabbath might have absorbed their attention. The twelve might have gone to these legalists and yet in another sense they could not : for they had felt the power of life, and power of life there was none in all that ethical hair-splitting. St Peter we know was a man with great reverence for law, a man too who had great fear of offending the strict upholders of law, but he could not put the law thus interpreted for the life. With the door of them who sat in Moses' seat open before him, he could but exclaim at the bare mention of leaving his Master, "Lord to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life." I hope that if such an alternative ever presents itself to any of us, if we are ever tempted to postpone the Gospel of life in Christ to the rubric of external observance, we may have grace—I had almost said, common sense—enough to make St Peter's resolution ours. But

the school which more than any other embodied the lifeless formalism of that time was not the only competitor for the discipleship of those who might choose no longer to be with Christ. The Sadducees had fair claims, as they considered, on the suffrages of thoughtful men. Their teaching was, in this respect at least, like that of the Pharisees—that it was unlike the words of Christ; in most respects it was the issue of an antagonistic mode of looking at the problems of human existence and the laws of human well-being. They doubtless did well in protesting against the numerous additions to the Divine Law recognised by the Pharisees: they saw clearly what a grievous burden was being laid on their fellow-countrymen by the rival sect. But like many who in our own day represent a similar intellectual tendency, they appear to have been greater in criticism than in construction. They had no message which could inspire the sorrowful with hope, and bring the sinful to a better mind. Perhaps it is a rather hard judgment which denounces

them as “idolaters of the material and the temporal;” but this we may certainly say, that in their view of man and of man’s destiny, there was no adequate solution of the riddle of life—that the twelve would have found in their school no consolations of a hope that reached forth unto the things unseen. Why? and, Whither? These two queries that demand some answers to satisfy the hearts of all travellers on life’s rough way remained to them without a satisfactory answer. The Sadducees would have given the disciples a philosophy of this life; but the words of eternal life could not have come forth from their lips.

Although I have spoken of Pharisees and Sadducees, I did not choose St Peter’s words for our consideration this afternoon with any view of making them the motto of an essay upon contemporary Jewish Schools. Such a task lies wide of my purpose and quite outside my power of performance. What has been said about them may, however, illustrate the point

of view from which I propose to ask you to look at some of the modern rivals of the Gospel—if one may venture on such a phrase—competitors with the words of eternal life for the allegiance of educated men. Those disciples mentioned in the text as going back were, as we have seen, disappointed men. Probably they had hoped to hear of a grand renewal of society to be effected promptly and decisively, and had heard instead words that seemed mystical about the bread that came down from heaven, and an inner life to be supported by that food of spirits. Very likely they had looked for a kingdom coming with observation—a kind of political earthquake in the earth—and were not prepared to wait and watch while a process of regeneration was going on silently, secretly, inwardly—like leaven working in the meal. Perhaps a servile war would have been more to their taste as a means of emancipation than such a letter as that of Paul to Philemon. Which method of going to work has been most powerful in setting the captive free, let the

history of the world tell! Which method is most likely to produce results of blessing in our present social disorders, let those ponder well who care to study the present in the light of the past before making up their minds at any time of conflict.

It is quite possible that you and I have been disappointed in the Gospel that has been long preached among us, and so at times a little weakened in our loyalty to Christ the Author and Finisher of the faith which it propounds. Think of Him as the Prince of Peace: think of His message to mankind as a message of peace, and then look at the state of the world! How far its inhabitants are from forming a united Christian brotherhood! What ruin and desolation is wrought on earth by causes which one might have hoped would ere now have ceased to act, if it were indeed true that God hath spoken to man by His Son! Can this be the earth which eighteen centuries ago heard angels from heaven sing their hopeful anthem of good will and peace? There is room—no

thoughtful man can deny it—for some disappointment here.

Again, take a narrower range and see what society is like in Christian lands. The Church itself is rent by party spirit and by party strife until it sounds almost like a satire in one's ears to hear a congregation sing the popular hymn :—

We are not divided,
All one body we,
One in hope, in doctrine,
One in charity.—

That is the poetry of ecclesiastical life; the dull prose is to be found in the law-courts and the religious newspapers. I am not lamenting differences of opinion on points where there is room for differences of opinion among honest Christian men, but when one thinks of the trivial details about which men fight bitterly, while men and women are living and dying, one does feel that much labour and strength are being thrown away. There is not that dwelling together in unity, which we might

perhaps have expected to find among brethren. Once more, when we regard the present condition of commercial morality, the disturbed relations of Labour and Capital, and the thousand bitter fruits that grow from the one plant of selfishness, we may feel disposed to ask whether it is of any use our reading any more those words of the Apostle's, which if once apprehended in their fulness would transfigure earth into the likeness of heaven, "We, being many, are one body in Christ."

You may think that I have given you but a gloomy sketch of the world in which God has placed us. I certainly meant to do so. The possible causes of apostasy are a gloomy subject. To these I would add one more—one of a character which can be known only to the heart of each who has learnt it by personal experience. Even with the Gospel in our hands, and accepting it as a trustworthy guide, we have not found answers to all questions that perplex—the removal of all doubts that rise. We have found, like St Paul, that notwithstanding

what we had taken as light from heaven, our vision is still but dark, and our knowledge partial. That inquiry, for instance, as to the future of humanity which has lately been so prominent in the religious literature of our time, has been the source of many misgivings. Life gives abundant opportunities for the trial of Christian faith, and such opportunities of trial are so many possibilities of failure.

What shall we say to these things? Year by year a number of young men, who have been brought up Christianly as to creed as well as virtuously as to conduct, enter the ancient homes of learning that surround this church. They find themselves exposed to new temptations with regard to points of conduct—that is inevitable as the youth grows into the man. They find themselves also in the midst of a conflict of opinions which is probably a strange experience to them—and this too is in a manner inevitable. They hear principles discussed as open for discussion which they have been accustomed to regard as axiomatic; they hear

beliefs argued about which they have been accustomed to reverence as high above the region of debate. They are perhaps tempted to go back and walk no more with Christ. Now, if I could talk freely with one of you who found himself in that state of mind, I should try to lead him on to that question of St Peter's—I should try to persuade him to look the alternatives fairly in the face; Going away from Christ, to whom shall I go? This much is certain, that such a one would find no lack of tutors who are ready to promise him great things.

Some professors of the physical sciences—men versed in the knowledge of the things in earth and sea and sky—would rejoice to welcome a pupil of an enquiring mind; and their welcome would be none the less hearty if they found him prepared to adopt the pursuits of science as furnishing the surest path to mental satisfaction. To know what can be known of the so-called *Knowable*—and to dismiss the so-called *Unknowable* as altogether unworthy

of serious attention, this is the method they recommend to us for the purification of our minds. Be it gladly acknowledged that Science has other teachers than these, as sermons preached from this pulpit, and the published utterances of lay convictions too, bear ample witness from time to time. Still we know that there is a sect which has as the motto on its banner, "Positive Science, and Positive Science only." This view of life seems to me like that of a man walking on a road, who is interested to examine the stones under his feet and the plants by the wayside, but who has convinced himself that it is quite useless to inquire whence he came, why he was sent, and whither he is going. Stones and plants looked at with the eye of a trained intelligence add a kind of interest to the journey no doubt—only be they questioned never so carefully, they do not tell the traveller what most of all he wants to know. They do not give him the key to the mysteries of his own personal being. They need the interpretation of Him who can trans-

form them into parables of the kingdom of heaven before they bring a message from the heart of God to the heart of man. They receive that interpretation not in the scientific text-book but in the Gospel of Christ. It would be but a poor exchange indeed to put the text-book in the Gospel's place.

But another door is open—another alternative is offered. The historian—the philosophical historian—cannot he supply what is wanting? He is ready to treat of men and manners. He will shew us how from rude beginnings Society has been developed into an elaborate organism; he will point out the ebb and flow of the wave of civilization in this land and in that; he will tell us of the relations between the climate of a country and the character of its population, and will furnish table after table of averages and statistics. With more or less assertion of exactness, he will exhibit laws that he deduces from them; with more or less allowance made for the influence of great men, he will shew us here a progress and there a cycle. From what

has been and what is, he may probably venture to prophesy what will be. There are indeed few studies with greater claims than this upon the careful regard of thoughtful men. Only let it be borne in mind that you and I are not only helping—each in his little sphere—to make history, but each is framing a biography as well, and amid the experiences which make up that biography are joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, to which the compilers of statistics can give no adequate expression. What shall give life to those individual lives? What shall enlighten the dark pages of those biographies? Have they no meaning and no purpose beyond the filling up of the numbers on the page? Is the rich variety of human circumstance, and effort, and struggle, intended for nothing beyond the furnishing of material for a tabulated summary whence arise theories of historic growth and decay? My brethren, we want surely to know each what his own life means and is meant for, and what is to be the ultimate outflow of this rapid stream of time that carries us along. If

we leave Christ, and turn away from His gospel, we shall not find the words of eternal life in the histories of the rise and fall of nations, or in the philosophy of the wealth of nations. They deal with men in masses, we need a power in the unit soul.

Shall we go then to the prophet of culture and hear him talk of art and beauty in form and sound, of light and shade, of contrasts and of harmonies? Shall we fill our minds with æsthetic criticisms, and our hearts with æsthetic emotions? Let us make sure first that the thing is possible. Remember that it requires a certain amount of sunshine for us to appreciate a picture-gallery. Many landscapes that are charming while bathed in the light of a summer's morning are dreary enough when the curtain of a November fog has fallen upon them. What are we to do and to think—what are we to try to feel—when the sun of earthly satisfactions does not shine, when the fog of life's trials and sorrows is gathering thick around? We acknowledge

indeed with thanksgiving, of "all things bright and beautiful," that "the Lord God made them all." We may well make it a careful, and I would say a reverent, study, wherein their brightness and beauty consist. But the plain fact is that there are things which are not bright and not beautiful. Even if our own lives are going along with little disturbance of their present calm, yet the force of sympathy must make us the bearers of a thousand burdens in our hearts. The Gospel of culture will never do instead of the Gospel of Christ. It has no word in it like this: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

After all, in spite of many open doors and tempting invitations, I believe that we shall find it our wisdom to stay with Christ, and to try to learn what He has to teach us about the purpose and issue of our lives. He gives us the best working plan—one which makes duties—and disagreeable duties too—fit in, and which does to some extent explain inci-

dents and appearances which without His explanation would have none at all. I have admitted, with all candour I hope, that there are difficulties which the Christian faith does not at present remove: that there are disappointments in Christian society and in ourselves which are very trying to Christian hopefulness. What is this but to confess with the Apostle that "now we see but darkly"? This, however, is no reason why we should shut our eyes to the light we have, and determine to call it darkness. Christ has told us that we are part of a great family. He has taught us to look up to Heaven and to say, Our Father, and in His life and death He has given us the fullest proof of that love which is ever drawing pure hearts upward. He who was despised and rejected of men is for all ages the grand demonstration that men in all their sorrows and their sinning are not despised and rejected of God. By His cross and passion, by His precious death and burial, by His glorious

resurrection and ascension, He proves Himself the Word of the divine philanthropy.

In His life, Christ has shewn us the essential features of the perfect human life. He was not devoted to the pursuits of science: He framed no elaborate theories: He did not dwell much on the beauties of Nature and Art: but, He did no sin, and, He went about doing good; and if scientific men, and studious men, and men who delight in things that please the eye and ear, would make their lives real and true, they need not in an ascetic spirit resign their cultivated interests: only they must make sure that these are filling the place they may fairly claim, and no other place, in the economy of their lives.

And though He whom the twelve followed in the days of His earthly sojourning be no longer in our midst, we are not left comfortless and without guidance in the world. He spake of a Spirit of Truth, who should dwell with His people. That Spirit can give power to the Gospel now, for remember that the

Gospel, if true for any, is true for you and me and all men. Through Him we may have strength to do, and patience to bear. In the midst of our duties, He can take the word of Christ, and urge us to earnest endeavour: "Work, while it is called to-day." In the midst of our sorrows, He can say as Christ said to the disciples when they were very sorrowful: "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

In spite then of difficulties which belong to our present point of view—in spite of disappointments which do but prove the truth of Christ's own word "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation"—while the calm searching question of the world's Redeemer "Will ye also go away?" is heard amid those distracting voices that summon to this side and to that, be this your answer to your Lord: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

V.

AND WHAT SHALL THIS MAN DO ?

(Quinquagesima Sunday, 1879.)

ST JOHN xxi. 20—22.

Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thec? follow thou Me.

THE great council of the nation has of late been much exercised about an important point of parliamentary procedure affecting,

or supposed by some to affect, the liberty of free discussion. The consideration of this point has shewn that it is quite impossible for the most acute of politicians to describe in accurate phrase the limits of useful debate. Logically, I suppose that the arguments for and against any given measure may be almost inexhaustible; and a large assembly of men intent upon the criticism of every word and phrase might protract a deliberation to almost any length. Practically, the business of the world has to be conducted according to readier methods. All who have had much to do with the conduct of public business know that there is a point, not to be defined in words, but to be determined in each case by a kind of practical intuition, when what is worth hearing has been said. Perhaps I may be allowed to quote a few words in illustration from a secular journal: "Almost all laws, privileges and prerogatives depend for their existence on the moderation and discretion of those who exercise or appeal to them. Almost any one might

be made unendurable, if carried to its logical extreme and construed in its literal sense. It is impossible to draw any hard and fast lines between ‘enough’ discussion and ‘too much.’ Common sense must tell us when the limit has been reached.”

Now as I thought over and tried to estimate this difficulty, it seemed to afford what may be termed a social parallel to an individual difficulty, which is of even greater interest, inasmuch as men are of more importance than kingdoms. What kingdoms are and are becoming depends very much upon the men who dwell within them. National measures are dependent upon certain anterior transactions of a personal and individual character.

Man has been often called a world in miniature: just think of him as a parliament in miniature. Within each of us hundreds of debates have been begun, and adjourned, and resumed, and ended, which have found no chronicle save in the unwritten record of a life. But what a

record that is! How all important to the man himself! What care he should take to come to right resolutions, so that each day's page should be the chronicle of right actions! It is not easy to exaggerate the significance of these internal debates upon which depend the issues of the life. Questions about our beliefs which have any bearing at all upon them demand serious thought. They ought not to be lightly raised and hastily determined. Our resolutions concerning them ought not to be at the mercy of each new article we chance to read—still less should they be seriously influenced by the clever sneer or brilliant epigram of the readiest talker in a little college coterie. I know well what an influence is often exercised by such agencies as these—with what a superficial importance his supposed liberation from the trammels of over-belief sometimes invests the youthful oracle of progressive thought—how very far it is from being true that hero-worship is dead amongst us. When you are brought face to face with the problems of man's duty

and man's destiny, let this at least be one of your rules in dealing with them: Think, and think thoughtfully: do not be led away by power of striking repartee, and remember that the very reverence within them may impose a certain silence upon those of your companions who have most right to speak, when faith and the things that are faith's are being freely and it may be flippantly handled.

Let me pass to another practical caution. Bear in mind that your thought about holy things sought to end in a practical decision bearing upon character and conduct. What the votes of such an assembly as I spoke of just now are to its debates, our determinations of the will to action are to our internal discussions. If man has a vocation in the world at all—if, that is to say, he is placed here for any purpose—that vocation and purpose must surely be the perfecting of goodness within himself and the diffusion of an influence of goodness around him, and it is for these ends that he is to use his life. If indeed

“there be no help in life,
Only continual passions waging war,
Cold doubt and endless strife,”

then are we of all creatures that we know most miserable. It is in dealing with this ‘if,’ that we need just such a mental provision as common sense must supply both to assemblies and to individuals. There is danger lest we prolong the preliminary discussion beyond its due limits, and so let the time slip past us which was meant for us to work in. It may be that this is one special temptation of an academic life—to weigh and measure, to measure and weigh again, until the day has gone by for putting the material thus carefully adjusted to much practical purpose in the world. Of certain changes in opinion one well qualified by long observation has lately remarked : “Some may be said to have passed a lifetime in going to and fro.” Now if conscientious convictions determine a man to this unproductive mode of spending the few short years he has to spend on earth among his

fellows, we must accept the fact, but accept it, I think, with sorrow and regret. Those years cannot have been meant for this kind of mental see-saw, this perpetual ebb and flow of reasonings, this consideration and reconsideration. Even that "honest doubt," which a poet of our own has glorified in oft-cited lines, and which certainly has its praiseworthy side, is not a thing to rest contented with, still less to cherish as though it gave us strength and guidance. Like over-much discussion in the Senate, it has its very serious inconveniences. It does not give much of a light to walk by: it does not give much of a rule to work by. Thought and conflict and prayer are well spent in trying to get out of that state of mind and into one of decided purpose, more like that which the Apostle of Christ describes in the words: "This one thing I do; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark." God forbid that one speaking in the name of Him who is the Truth

should ever appear to speak lightly of the search after truth. Only let the search be made with this aim in view—the doing of such portion of it as does come to light, and then more light shall bless that doer in his deed. It is one of the great principles of spiritual learning: “If any man will do God’s will, he shall know of the doctrine.”

We thus arrive at another rule concerning the knowledge of holy things—that the way to increase in that knowledge is to be practical in our relation to them, to do what we know at present. The man in whom there is no reaching forth unto what is high and heavenly, in whose will there is no onward and upward direction, has no right to complain if he knows nothing of the blessing of the pure in heart. He may be clever, but the very light that is in him may be darkness in relation to the things which are spiritually discerned. A real act of willing to do the will of God—a hearty, holy resolution—will help us mightily against

our doubts. That way of willing what is holy in ourselves is the way to the higher heights of divine knowledge. Is it not true that instead of bearing well in mind this relation of the will to things holy, we often treat the things of God simply as matters of curious debate? Perhaps we read some pamphlet or review, which public opinion regards as worthy of note amid the mass of print, and we criticise it and hear it criticised by others, shewing the same kind of interest in eternity and its bearings upon time that we shew in a question of political economy or a point of party warfare. But that is not the method of training in God's school for human spirits. Sincerity of purpose—decision of the will—determination to obey—without these no promise of growing knowledge is ours. My brethren, if we wait for the answer to every possible question, and the removal of every possible doubt, before taking our part as workers in God's great field, we are likely to wait, and wait, and wait again, and perhaps still find ourselves

afar off, when by a wiser discipline of self and by a closer walk with God we should have been drawing nearer to the resolution of our perplexing difficulties and the resting-place of our longing hearts. "God's secrets," says the Jewish proverb, "are to Himself and the sons of His house."

I spoke last Sunday of the importance of biography, of the need there was that in accepting a theory of life we should take into account not the tendencies of masses of men only, but the experiences of individual men also. Will you pardon my giving you a scrap of autobiography? I confess that a few years ago I admired much more than I do now such sentiments as these—this from a French philosopher: "If I held truth captive in my hand, I should open my hand and let it fly, in order that I might again pursue and capture it;" this from a German: "Did the Almighty holding in His right hand Truth, and in his left Search after Truth, deign to tender me the one I might prefer,—in all humility, but

without hesitation, I should request Search after Truth." As one gets older, and work thickens around, one comes to value any portions of truth that may become one's own more and more for the guiding power that is in them—to regard them more as the sailor regards the stars of heaven, and less as the astronomer regards them. It is quite true that the art of navigation without the science of astronomy would be but a series of lame experiments; still that art of living well and wisely, which we should all try to acquire, is more like steering a ship than calculating an eclipse. We must sail on with such knowledge of our course and of our haven as we have, hoping that from day to day it will "grow from more to more." We have in the Gospel a chart to live by and the revelation of a power of life; we have not a system complete and rounded which will satisfy curiosity on all puzzling questions, however natural that curiosity may be. Let us see how Christ Himself hath taught us this lesson in that part

of a short conversation with St Peter that I read as the text.

Christ had spoken to him about his future. What He had said had apparently this practical end in view—to educate him into the expectation of trial and suffering. That hope of a visible restoration of the kingdom to Israel, which was so prominent a feature of national life at the time, died away very slowly even in the minds of those who had followed the Son of Man along the way of sorrows. Peter, restored after his fall to his apostleship, was perhaps indulging again in the thought of throne and crown, and had need to learn that as the Master Himself went not up to joy, but first He suffered pain; as He entered not into His glory before He was crucified, so too the disciple's way to eternal joy was to suffer here with Christ, and his door to enter into eternal life was gladly to die with Christ. He had need to learn in his own person that seeming failure may be the truest success—that it was possible to glorify God not only

in a post of influence and dignity among men, but also by that apparently complete collapse of earthly effort which men call death. This glimpse into his own future excites his curiosity in behalf of his friend, St John. His question—"Lord, and what shall this man do?" may have been prompted only by loving interest—or it may have had in it, as some have thought, a touch of jealousy, as if he had said, "And what of this my colleague? Is the burden of disaster to fall upon me alone, while he remains to see the result of all this toil, to gather the harvest of these weary years of working, watching, waiting?" But I like best to think of the question as shewing simply a certain affectionate curiosity. It was not unnatural that he should wish to know something of his companion's future as well as of his own—to learn how he too would fare amid the changes and chances of life—to hear something, if any information were forthcoming, as to the method of his departure out of this world into the other.

But whatever the motive of the question, there is certainly something of rebuke in the answer of our Lord, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me." I am not going to recount to you the various modes in which critics have proposed to interpret that tarrying till the coming of the Lord. It is more to my present purpose that our Lord treats the curiosity of the somewhat volatile Peter as a tendency to be repressed. It is as though He had said, "Do not let this anxiety to pry into the future get hold upon your mind. Its issues are among the secret things that belong to God; they do not concern thee at present. Thou hast a distinct position in the world—a distinct calling to fulfil. Be about that earnestly, zealously, with many a prayer and many an effort. Leave him, thy companion, to his God, and follow thou me."

So does our Lord recall the wandering thoughts of His Apostle to what it most concerned him to think about. "The great mat-

ter," says a devout writer, "that is all in all to us, is duty, and not events; for duty is ours, events are God's; our own duty, and not another's; for every man shall bear his own burden; our present duty, and not the duty of the time to come; for sufficient to the day shall be the directions thereof." You may perhaps think that this is narrowing to too small a compass the area of legitimate speculation, but certainly if error it be, it is an error on the right side. If such counsels of prudence had prevailed more amongst us, our theological discussions would be very considerably simplified. The more completely we are able to rest in the thought that the Judge of all the earth shall do right whatever right is, the greater shall be our peace of mind and the clearer the path of duty before us. Jesus said, "Follow thou Me." The words spoken at such a time can scarcely fail to have stirred within the Apostle some memory of that time when he had been summoned to be the companion of the Christ. And now it must

have aroused within him sad recollections of his past failure, and, it may be, a wholesome self-distrust as to his future course. Do we find the echo of the thought of the text in that description which St Peter gave of the character of Christ as the standard of the Christian character; “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps”?

“Follow thou Me.” Here we have the sum of Christian duty, the living fruit of Christian faith. In the picture of His white purity who did no sin, in the record of His self-sacrificing love who pleased not Himself, there was the germ of a new moral growth in mankind, a power of goodness set at work in the world which has wrought mightily in the years that are past.

Christendom has followed Christ in care for the sick and suffering, for healing virtue has gone out of Him; in liberating the slave, for in Him there is neither bond nor free; in originating efforts for the recovery of the

sinful, for He came to seek and to save that which was lost. In spite of all those disappointments that I mentioned last Sunday as possible causes of apostasy, we can appeal to what has been called “the fifth Gospel”—the Gospel written in the history of Christian nations and in the institutions of Christian lands. Quinquagesima Sunday is in a manner sacred to the glories of charity. While we learn from St Paul that charity is greater even than faith, let us not fail to bear this in mind, that the charity which he extolled had its root and spring in faith in Christ as the utterance of God’s own charity to man. And I think that it will be found still that those who are most ready to practise any self-denial for their brethren’s sake, who are willing to give of their leisure and their strength in work for those who most need a friendly hand, are men who are not ashamed to confess that what work they do, they do as the servants of Christ. I do not speak of the talkers—long and loud—about the

people and their wrongs, but of those who are really trying to be of some practical use to their neighbours. I mention this here because I think that you may be disposed to underrate the real power of Christian effort which is at work in society. New theories of the universe, which rearrange creation—these find their place in the reviews: but creation remains much as it was before their publication. New experiments in ritual, new varieties of doctrine—these make some places and some men famous, and from week to week we have the latest intelligence of them. But it is not generally healthy effort that inspires the most striking paragraphs, and we should make a great mistake if we judged the main part of the work from occasional vagaries here and there. My special reason for mentioning this is to speak a word of encouragement to any who may be shrinking from committing themselves to definite Christian work as Clergymen in our English towns, through mistaken apprehensions of their true condition and of the

attitude of those who dwell in them towards us clergy and our calling. If indeed we assume an air of official infallibility, and pretend that all is clear to us where much is obscure — that we have a key to all mysteries and all knowledge : if we separate ourselves from the thought and movement of our time and look at them from a disrespectful distance : if we act as lords over God's heritage, and not as ensamples to the flock ; then depend upon it we shall be found out, and deservedly despised for our pretentious folly. But if as honest men we do not say, We see, when we cannot see : if we admit that the layman's difficulties are our difficulties too : if we do our work according to the light we have, trusting that as the need arises more light will come : if we are anxious, over and above all things else, that the righteousness of Christ may be fulfilled in us and in our people, then we need not fear the oft-threatened alienation of the laity. So far as human causes go, it must depend very much upon the conduct of those

who speak to men in Christ's name whether the social movements of Christendom be in any sense collective followings of Christ or not. There have been such movements in time past; there may be in the time to come.

But I must not be tempted into an essay upon society. There is an awful individuality about that word of Christ to Peter: "Follow thou Me." It is the word of the Captain to his soldier, of the Master to his scholar. It does not invite to discussion; it calls for decision. It is a word to each. Christianity has done what it has in the world because the power of the life of Christ has been felt in the hearts of men. He deals not, in the first instance, with the regeneration of masses, but with the restoration of single souls to a purity and love that have been lost. Otherwise Christianity could never have been a mighty social force, for it came not to the earth with earthly might and glory, but with a moral power that penetrates and with a

gift of spiritual healing that creates anew. Christ came to this earth of many temptations, that in due time they whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren might be raised to the heaven of a character like His.

And this surely is the end of all religion so far as this education-time on earth is concerned. But think not to reach this end by making light of the way that leads to it—the way of Creed, and Prayer, and Sacraments. Those who have attained to the highest heights of Christian character have told us that in and through these they have received patience to bear, and strength to overcome. That is as certain as the testimony of the best men in many generations can make it. Only let us not mistake the means for the end. Let us try to make our use of them such as to contribute towards its attainment. The end is likeness to Christ. Oh to be patient with something of His patience, and forbearing even with the rough and rude—to endure contradiction with something of

His spirit—to work on in spite of vexations and discouragements—to deny self, to exalt God, to bless others—this is our task as the artists of our lives, if we would indeed realise in ourselves the Heavenly Father's idea of His children. That idea has been wrought out in all the beauty of a spotless holiness in the person of our elder Brother. We are assured of His sympathy with us as we try amid the temptations which He knows so well to follow in His footsteps. And amid the disturbing elements of this life on earth—amid the perplexities of the age in which we live—amid the discussions numberless and endless which find an early parallel in St Peter's question, “And what shall this man do?”—there comes to each of us a clear decisive call: “Follow thou Me.” That call has a certain severity in it: it admits of no compromise: it is direct, personal, searching. Let us then be thankful that above all the noisy confusions of man's making, and above all the weary distractions of our hearts, there

comes along with that this other word of gracious encouragement: "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

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